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The Ministry of the GOSPEL a good Work :

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the
O R D I N A T I O N
O F T H E
Rev. Mr. DANIEL HARSON,

A T
Moreton-Hampstead, Devon,
July 27. 1737.

By STEPHEN TOWGOOD. K

To which is added, a

C H A R G E

Delivered on the same Occasion.

Both published at the request of 7 Ministers then present

By HENRY GROVE.

L O N D O N,

Printed for RICHARD FORD, at the *Angel* over
against the *Compter*; and JOHN GRAY, at the
Cross-Keys; both in the *Poultry*. MDCCXXXVII.

(Price One Shilling.)

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SERMON

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ORDINATION

OF THE

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AT

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LONDON

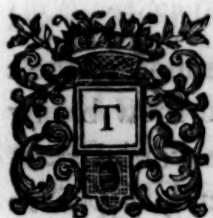
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I TIM. iii. 1.

This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.



THE words I have chosen for the subject of my discourse on this solemn occasion, are, you see, introduced by the Apostle with a particular commendation of them to our notice and attention: *This is a true saying.* 'Tis a proposition of unquestionable certainty, demanding a ready assent and serious regard, as containing matter of considerable weight and importance: Which will appear as I proceed in considering the following things.

First, WHAT is meant by the office of a bishop.

Secondly, THE representation of it under the notion of a *work*.

Thirdly, THE *desire* and *inclination* to this office and *work* in the persons who undertake it, which is here supposed.

Fourthly, THE comprehensive motive and inducement to such a desire and undertaking, which is here mentioned, *viz.* that 'tis a *good work*.

First, I AM to consider the import of these words, *the office of a bishop*, and shew briefly what is intended thereby. The word ἐπισκοπῆ, thus translated, signifies in general, *inspection* or *oversight*. Accordingly those who were set over the workmen employed in repairing the temple, are by the *Greek* translators called, ἐπισκοποι, *overseers* *. But in the New Testament the word denotes the ministerial office. The persons sustaining it, (whose business is to preside in a particular congregation of Christians) are distinguished from others by a variety of names and characters, all im-

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12, 17.

porting the same with what we now understand by a *Gospel-minister*.

T H A T there is such a divine appointment of the office of the ministry, is an important truth; not at all the less evident for that it has been exploded by some, who pretend to greater freedom of thought and enquiry than others. 'Tis a dictate of natural light and common reason, that there should be some appointed to *lead* in the public offices of devotion, and to instruct, admonish, exhort and comfort others, according to their several circumstances, which require such assistance; and that proper persons should be chosen, who are duly qualified for such service, and inclined to devote themselves to it. Nor can we, who believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, question whether it be agreeable to the divine will, for a particular order of men to be set a-part to the ministerial office, while we find their distinct work specified, and qualifications described, the duties of the people towards them enjoined, and the continuance of the office to the end of the world plainly declared and provided for; which things 'tis beside my present purpose to enlarge upon. Nor will I add any other particular proof hereof, than
that

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that express text; *He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ* *. He appointed both extraordinary and ordinary officers in his church: The former, *viz. apostles, prophets, evangelists*, (who were furnished with extraordinary gifts and powers) for special purposes and seasons; the latter, *viz. pastors and teachers*, for standing use and benefit. And as long as Christ has a church in the world to be built up, so long there must be a set of men, whose special business it is to attend that momentous affair.

Now these officers in the church are frequently called *bishops* or *overseers*, as well as *presbyters* or *elders*; nor does any distinction between these two appear in the New Testament, nor do we find the latter represented as an order of men subordinate and inferior to the former. So that to those who believe the word *presbyter* in Scripture to be a name of *office*, the identity of the office denoted by the names *presbyter* and *bishop*, one would think should be very evident. In this chapter, which my text begins,

* Eph. iv. 11, &c. dent.

the apostle lays down the qualifications of bishops and deacons, without saying any thing of presbyters; whom 'tis not at all likely he would have omitted, had they been a different sort of persons from those intended by bishops. Accordingly we find that the same endowments and accomplishments are required in both: *For this cause* (says the same apostle to Titus) *I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst ordain presbyters in every city. If any* (viz. that is to be ordained a presbyter) *be blameless-----for a bishop must be blameless* *. What force, or pertinence, or sense would there be in this reasoning, if *bishop* and *presbyter* signified persons of a distinct order? And how can it be supposed the apostle would have thus expressed himself, if he had known any such disparity between them as some imagine? Thus likewise the *presbyters* of *Ephesus* are called *bishops*, and to *them* the oversight of the church in that place is committed. *Paul* sent to *Ephesus*, and called the *presbyters* of the church, and when they were come to him, he said, *Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you ~~episcopos~~ bishops* †, as the word is rendered every where else. Accord-

* Tit. i. 5, 6, 7.

† Acts xx. 28.

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ingly, St. Peter exhorts the ministers of the scattered Jews, whom he stiles *presbyters*, to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof*, ἐπισκοπῶντες, acting the part of bishops. They were to discharge the episcopal office, and to perform all the duties belonging to it. Agreeably hereto, we find that *Timothy* had the ministerial office or gift conferred on him, by the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery* or company of *presbyters*, or elders, i. e. ministers. Nor does it seem reasonable to suppose that St. *Paul's* imposition of hands on *Timothy*, mentioned 2 Ep. i. 6. rendered his ordination valid, as some assert: For, as 'tis not improbable this refers to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the apostles alone had the power of conferring, so if it be granted, that St. *Paul* there speaks of *Timothy's* ordination, yet 'tis certain *Timothy* did not receive his investiture from him alone, but from the whole body of *presbyters*. And, doubtless, *presbyters* (who are the only gospel-ministers and pastors by divine appointment) are in all succeeding ages empowered and authorized to set apart qualified persons to the same sacred office, there being no one duty mentioned, as enjoined

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—blessed A. + * 1 Pet. v. 2.

vigni

bishops,

bishops, from which *presbyters* are secluded. The time will not allow me to expatiate on this argument, in justification of the present solemnity. These few hints may suffice to shew that our proceedings are warrantable, and those men unreasonable, who would invalidate and nullify our orders and administrations, and possess people with an opinion, that we are irregular and sacrilegious usurpers of the office; and have no right to act as ministers, particularly in ordaining others, not being ordained ourselves, because not by *diocesan bishops*, which the Holy Scripture (whereby we desire to govern our practice) knows nothing of. Thus you see what is meant by the *office of a bishop*, mentioned in my text. I proceed

Secondly, To consider the representation of it under the notion of *a work*. If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth, 'tis not said *a good preferment*, but *a good work*: not the honours and advantages of this world, but useful employment and labour in the church of Christ. *Barnabas* and *Saul* were by the direction of the Holy Ghost, separated for the work whereunto he had called them,

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them *, the *work of the ministry*. Nor do those deserve the name of ministers, who in their general conduct make it appear that they forget the import of that name; and neglect the proper duties of their function. This sacred office is not to be considered as a post of ease and self-indulgence, or of earthly grandeur and glory, but of diligent, humble service. Those that are put into it, are to look upon themselves as *workmen*, and obliged to approve themselves *workmen that need not to be ashamed*. They are to *labour in the word and doctrine*, not taking state upon themselves, instead of looking well to their people, but being ever *willing to spend and and to be spent* for them. They are their *servants for Jesus sake* †, and as such called to *work and labour*, not to *trifle and loiter*; not to give up themselves to a lazy, unthinking, unactive course of life, or to enjoy the profits of their station without any due returns of care for their peoples souls.

MINISTERS are called *pastors* and *shepherds*, implying constant labour and tender care in feeding and guarding the flock; they are *watchmen*, and so continually obliged to

* Acts xiii. 2.

† 2 Cor. iv. 5.

observe

observe the dangers to which their people are exposed, and to give them proper cautions and warnings. They are *labourers* in the *Lord's vineyard*, and so are to take pains in planting, watering, and cultivating it, *that it may bring forth much fruit*. They are *builders*, and must be careful to lay a good foundation, and raise an answerable superstructure, that they may edify the church of Christ: not building with *wood, hay and stubble*, with their own useless and worthless fancies and inventions, but with *gold, silver, and precious stones*; the valuable and important truths of the Gospel, in their native purity, simplicity and beauty, without any corrupt mixtures, remembering that *every man's work shall be made manifest* *. They are called *soldiers*, whose business it is to fight against the powers of darkness, and all their instruments and agents; to strive to subdue the lusts of men, and conquer their prejudices against religion, by the most pathetic moving addresses to them, the closest reasonings and most earnest expostulations with them, and most importunate prayers to God for them. They are *earnestly to contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints* †, and being set for the defence of the

* 1 Cor. iii. 12.

† Jude 3.

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*Gospel**, they are to maintain the truths of it against all opposition; endeavouring, with a serious concern, the conviction of gainfayers, and the confirmation of the doubting and wavering: not failing to set before their people the evidences of christianity, with the principles and duties of it, and the reasonableness of believing what is revealed, and observing what is enjoined; that they may be *found in the faith*, and may not *deny the Lord that bought them*; but practically own him for their *sole master*, and cheerfully submit to his authority, without being influenced by those who *arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them*, to take men off from their regards to the great *Teacher and Head* of the church; that they may follow *them* rather than *him*, who alone has a right to prescribe to them. Thus they are to preach Christ (*i. e.* the Gospel of Christ) *warning every man, and teaching every man with all wisdom*†, (which requires much labour and study) *that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*; not neglecting to *stir up the gift that is in them*, but giving attendance to reading, and exhortation, meditating on these things, and giving themselves wholly to them‡;

* Phil. i. 17.

† Col. i. 28.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 13, &c.
being

being *instant in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine* *.-----Such is the ministerial work, concerning which I must not enter farther into particulars under this head of discourse; but go on to consider,

Thirdly, THE *desire and inclination* to this office and work in the person who undertakes it, which is here supposed: *If a man desire the office, &c.* Those that enter into this service, must *willingly offer themselves* to it, and engage in it with chearfulness. The work of the ministry must be the object of *desire*: nor will our Lord have any employed in it, who are not free to it. The question proposed to those who come for holy orders in the church of *England*, is, “Do you trust
“ you are inwardly moved by the Holy
“ Ghost to take upon you this office and
“ ministration, to serve God for the pro-
“ moting of his glory, and the edifying his
“ people? The answer constantly given to
“ this question is; I trust so.” Those that give it are concerned to enquire whether they are sincere in doing it; nor should any take this office upon them, without such an inclina-

* 2 Tim. iv. 2.

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tion to it, as results from a sense of the excellence and importance of it, and a hope of being serviceable to the interests of religion, which they should have much more at heart than any worldly emoluments or acquisitions attending it. And though serious considering persons, who are least apt to be determined by such sinister views, are many times most apt to draw back from it, and decline it, under deep impressions of the awfulness and difficulty of it, and a humble sense of their unfitness for it, crying out with the apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things* *? yet their backwardness before they undertake it is overcome, and such a prevailing willingness wrought in them to apply themselves to the ministerial work, that, in a sober sense, they may say, they hope they are *moved to it by the Holy Ghost*.

Moses was at first very loth to accept the commission God charged him with, and to go on the errand he sent him upon. He multiplies objections and excuses, which God (though we are told his anger was kindled against him) condescended to answer, reasoning and arguing the matter with him, till he had overcome him †. The prophet *Isaiab* dis-

* 2 Cor. ii. 16.

† Exod. iv.

covered a greater willingness to engage in the service for which God designed him: *I heard a voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? then said I, here am I, send me* *. “ Give me a commission and full instructions, and I’ll readily go; im-
 “ ploy me about what work thou seest fit,
 “ make what use of me thou pleatest; I’ll
 “ make no objections or demur, but forth-
 “ with comply with the intimations of thy
 “ will, depending on thine aids.” He was not pressed into the service, but a volunteer in it: and this every minister of Christ must be, *taking the oversight of the flock not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind* †. Our Master demands the heart, and if *that* be withheld from him; if those that take the *character* upon them, have no love or liking to the *service*, but are wholly influenced by other considerations, as there’s no probability of their doing much good, so they have in reality no mission or call to the ministry; as all those have, who being duly qualified for it, *desire* to be engaged in it, and unfeignedly dedicate themselves to it; Providence giving them an opportunity for the exercise of it. So that the

* Isaiah vi. 8. † 1 Pet. v. 2.
 business

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business of ordainers is to declare those ministers of Christ, who were really so before; not properly to give them their commission, which they are unable to do, but by such a publick testimony of their approbation of them, to recommend them to the approbation and esteem of the people; and to the blessing of heaven, by their united, fervent prayers for them. And this is sufficient to give all Christians satisfaction of the truth of their church's ministry and ordinances, without flying up into the clouds (as one speaks) and inventing the mysteries of *uninterrupted succession, indelible characters*, and the like. Nor, indeed, could there be the imposition of a thousand episcopal hands with the utmost solemnity, would that be an effectual conveyance of ministerial powers, where the mentioned disposition, inclination, and self-dedication are wanting. Some such solemn rite is highly proper and requisite to preserve order, to secure the ministry from contempt, and promote the great ends of religion, by preventing the intrusion of ignorant pretenders. But how it can give any one a proper authority to act as a minister of Christ, whatever he be in his heart, and how little disposition soever he has to the ministerial work, is hard

hard to conceive. There must be a desire of this *office* as well as a fitness for it in those who are duly call'd to it; an inclination to the *service* arising from a conviction of its value and usefulness; and a free and voluntary purpose of being employed with a necessary diligence in so good a work, in hope of answerable success. But this leads me to consider,

Fourthly, The comprehensive motive or inducement to this desire and undertaking, *viz.* that it is a *good work*. And God grant that the consideration of it as such, may have some good effect upon us. 'Tis then,

I. A GOOD, that is, an *honourable* work. The employment of gospel-ministers is truly noble and sublime; and it well becomes, and indeed greatly concerns them, to think highly of *that*, while they think meanly of *themselves*. When St. Paul was commissioned to be a preacher of the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, there were those that vilify'd him, and the office he bore; but *he*, while he consider'd himself as *less than the least of all saints, and not worthy to be an Apostle*, yet magnify'd his *ministry**. Whatever others thought of it,

* Rom. xi. 13.

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he look'd upon it as honourable. And so it is still; for every faithful minister *now* serves the same great master the *Apostles* did, and is employ'd in the same sort of work; preaching the same glorious and everlasting Gospel which they preach'd, and endeavouring to spread the same excellent religion which they propagated in so wonderful a manner, through an almighty energy accompanying their ministrations. A *religion* attended with the most uncontestable proofs of its truth and heavenly original, and bearing the most illustrious characters of divinity upon it. The ministers of this religion can't be thought by any who have just sentiments of things, to have taken upon them a low and contemptible office. They are *servants*, 'tis true; but their work is of a spiritual nature, and does not immediately relate to the concerns of a perishing body, and a transient world. They serve under the King of Kings, who makes use of them in effecting the great purposes of his grace. Their business is to transact the most momentous and concerning affairs between God and men. They are charg'd with the counsels and messages of heaven, and with the vast and important interests of immortal souls. Their master sends them upon
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the same noble design, on which he himself appeared in the world, namely, to demolish the kingdom of the devil, and establish his own upon the ruins of it. Their ministry is conversant about no lower concerns than the life and happiness, the perfection and glory of the most excellent beings in the visible creation. 'Tis intended to illustrate and display the adorable attributes of God, in the wonderful recovery and salvation of lost man. They have the honour *to be workers together* with him in the business of reconciling sinners to himself; and being the *angels of the churches*, they are *the glory of Christ* *. 'Tis in his name they officiate, by his authority, and for the advancement of his honour, as well as the most valuable interests of those for whom he died. They pursue the commission he gives them, and 'tis in his most glorious cause they are engag'd, while they set themselves to pull down the strong-holds of sin, and to persuade men to make a right use of their noble faculties and powers, to maintain a due subjection to their Maker, and dominion over themselves, and so to act agreeably to the original intention of their being, and the invariable dictates of eternal rea-

2 Cor. viii. 23.

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son and truth. They have the honour to *preach the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and to make known to men *the manifold wisdom of God*, and *that love which passeth knowledge*; and to lead them into an acquaintance with *those things which the angels desire to look into*. In a word, they have the honour to be the instrumental causes of that glorious change, which appears when souls are form'd to a divine likeness, and the excellence of a divine power is manifested in turning sinners from the error of their ways, and engaging them in pursuits worthy the ambition of reasonable creatures design'd for immortality. So good and honourable a work is that of the ministry.

2. 'Tis good, that is, *profitable*. I don't mean that 'tis generally attended with considerable worldly advantage, or that a man by undertaking the ministry is likely to do himself *much good* in this respect. There are those indeed who, by a practice which some of their own greatest and best divines have freely condemn'd, don't scruple to enrich themselves; who make it their business to add *living* to *living* (as if this were a chief part of the good work to which they are call'd) committing the charge of their *ad-*
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ditional stocks to others, whom they allow but a *small part* of a *large income* for performing the service, in consideration of which *the whole* of it is suppos'd to be due: as if any besides the *labourer* were *worthy of the reward*, and it were not a dictate of common sense and common honesty, that *the work and wages ought to go together*. Such as these are to be excepted, who find the ministerial office very profitable on a secular account. But as to others, who have no inclination, whatever opportunity they may have, to drive such a trade, and make merchandize of souls; *they* for the most part, can have no rational expectation of any great matters of this sort, nor will they envy those that have succeeded in such attempts, while they consider the *work* they are employ'd in as very advantageous upon an infinitely more valuable account, and themselves as negotiating the greatest concerns, and engaged in the pursuit of the most useful design: For the office they bear is really a publick blessing, calculated to promote the true welfare of mankind, and to make people happy in both worlds. Their business is, to invite and exhort to the practice of that *godliness, which is profitable*
for

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for all things *; to all those instances of duty and obedience to the divine commands, which are necessary to the prosperity and peace of political bodies, and particular persons; to those methods of management, which are conducive to our health, the success of our affairs, and our good name and reputation in the world; to that temperance, sobriety and purity, which are the best preservatives against painful and mortal diseases, ~~and from~~ all such excesses as are prejudicial to nature; to that prudence, diligence, and industry, in our employments, and that justice and honour, in our dealings and commerce with one another, which are favourable to our temporal acquisitions; to that humility, meekness, patience, self-denial, universal benevolence, and beneficence, which have a friendly aspect on the safety, and quiet, and comfort of life, which are the best security from all injuries and mischiefs, and the best remedy and relief under all the unavoidable calamities and miseries of life. The more immediate business of ministers (I say) is to teach and invite people thus to consult their own advantage in this world; and thus to secure to themselves an inconceivable and endless

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

felicity in a better: to urge upon them all those considerations which *scripture* and *reason* suggest, to prevail with them, if possible, to be wise for themselves, and thus assist them in prosecuting the greatest good, and shunning the greatest evil, in gaining an interest in the divine favour now, and an admission at last into the divine blissful presence, which is the consummation of all the christian's wishes and hopes: in obtaining the satisfying and most desirable evidences of the full pardon of their numberless offences by the blood of Jesus, and their exemption from the final sentence of condemnation, and their salvation *from wrath thro' him; from all the penal effects and consequences of sin in a future state of distance from God; from the intolerable miseries of a never-dying worm and unquenchable fire; from all the dreadful lashes and cutting reflections of a guilty mind, and the horrors and agonies of endless despair.* And must it not be own'd, that the ministerial work, which is design'd and fitted (and has always in some measure been effectual) for the advancement of such great and excellent purposes, is a *good work*? and that those, who in good earnest apply themselves to it, and conscientiously perform

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form every part of it with these views, are usefully employ'd? That while they endeavour, by their instructions, admonitions, reproofs, exhortations and prayers, together with the influence of a good example, to mend the world, and reform mankind, and so help to preserve them from all that's formidable, and lead them on to the possession of all that's desirable, they are engaged in a profitable service? *profitable* to others, and eminently so to themselves. For tho', as I said, they may not expect (generally speaking) to get very much by it, according to the common notion of gain yet while they are diligent and faithful, they'll find that in their *labour* there is real *profit*, and that it will turn to good account, and be unspeakably more gainful than any worldly advantages could make it. Their work is so good, that 'tis its own reward; and while they study the benefit of others, they promote their own. As their proper business leads them to a more intimate converse with divine things, to more accurate searches into the sacred records, and a greater frequency in all the retir'd exercises of devotion, than can be thought practicable to most others, whose affairs and engagements in life will not admit of such an abstraction from
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the world, so every good minister of Jesus Christ knows how great an advantage this is, nor will he wholly neglect to improve it. While such are making preparation for the instruction of others, they can't fail to instruct themselves, nor be altogether unaffected with those awful and affecting things which they deliver to their hearers. While their thoughts dwell upon subjects that are of infinite consequence, they'll find themselves impress'd, awaken'd, enliven'd, disposed to form resolutions of a suitable conduct, in a dependance on divine assistances, which they know are as necessary for themselves as their people. Their exhortations to duty will be attended with penitent reflections on their own neglects, and with renewed self-obligations to greater diligence and fidelity in their master's service. The moving representations they make of the amiableness and excellence of religion, and the happiness of it's votaries; of the malignity of sin, and the misery of sinners; their endeavours to promote a love to the one, and a hatred of the other; their lively penetrating and engaging forms of address to the reason and consciences of those who attend on their ministrations; must needs have some happy influence on themselves: Nor will they be

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able from time to time to repeat their serious warnings and calls to sinners, to set before them *the terrors of the Lord*, and persuade them *to flee from the wrath to come*, without considering how deplorable their own condition must be, if they should *teach others*, but *not themselves*, and *after they have preached to others*, should themselves *be cast away* *, disapproved and finally rejected of God. And how proper is such a thought to excite and engage them to a becoming care and solicitude to recommend themselves to the divine approbation, by a sincere discharge of their duty, and prompt them to labour, that they may be accepted of the sovereign judge, to whom they as well as their people are accountable? And how vastly advantageous to them is the ministerial employment, when such a prevailing temper and behaviour is the growing fruit of it, and when they thus attain a rational confidence towards God, through Jesus Christ, who will reward his faithful ministers with distinguishing marks of esteem and affection in the great day of his appearing? Nor will *that reward* be dispensed according to the *success*, but the *sincerity* of their endeavours to answer the great ends of their ministry,

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

and they'll be *a sweet savour unto God in them that perish, as well as them that are sav'd**. If sinners will remain impenitent, and obstinately set against all the methods of conviction and reformation; if they will go on hardening their hearts, after a long series of attempts to soften them, after all the labours and prayers of their ministers, who are *affectionately desirous of their good, and long after them in the bowels of Jesus*; the blood of such will not lie at *their door*: their work is left *with the Lord*, and their judgment and reward *with their God*; their reward which they *shall in no wise lose*, tho' they *lose their labour* as to great numbers of their hearers, and *spend their strength for nought, and in vain*. They that make it their business to *turn many to righteousness*, shall shine with a peculiar lustre in the heavenly world, and receive from the *chief shepherd a crown of glory that fadeth not away†*. So profitable is the ministerial work, and so justly does it deserve to be call'd a *good work*. Which consider'd, you'll expect I should add,

3. 'TIS GOOD, that is, pleasant. The advantage attending it, which I have very imperfectly represented, can't be reflected upon,

* 2 Cor. ii. 15.

† 1 Pet. v. 4

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without giving us a delightful view of it, and convincing us that those who are sincerely engaged in it, may find much pleasure in the discharge of it. It must be own'd, 'tis not without its difficulties and discouragements, as 'tis a laborious, painful work, if it be minded and follow'd as it ought to be; so those who are faithful must expect a variety of opposition in it. That infidelity and profaneness, that worldliness and sensuality, that pride and envy, that ignorant and bitter zeal, that superstition, bigotry and enthusiasm, which are continually working and appearing every where more or less in a diversity of forms, must needs give them uneasiness; nor is it any wonder if they frequently feel the effects of these corrupt dispositions. And when they find their hopes of success disappointed, and perceive that many of their people won't hearken to them, nor be persuaded to *abandon their lusts*, no, *not to save their souls*, but still appear *enemies to the cross of Christ**, neglecting the *great salvation*, working out their own damnation, and *glorifying in it*; no wonder if they tell the *melancholy story* (as the great Apostle did) with a *weeping eye*, and an *aching heart*. But not-

* Phil. iii. 18.

withstanding, this, it may be truly affirmed, that the work of a minister is a pleasant work. 'Tis undoubtedly so, where the inclination leads to it, and *the heart is in it*. Such can say, as their great master before them, *my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work* *. If they have a taste for divine things, as every good minister has, such a pleasure will result from their daily converse with them, as will be more than sufficient to ballance all their pains and trouble of every kind. While they are providing food for their flocks, they'll richly entertain and feast themselves, and will find in the word of God (which 'tis their business to study) a relishing sweetness superior to all other gratifications.

AND will they not with pleasure publish the glad-tidings of gospel-grace, and carry to their hearers the grateful messages of reconciliation and peace with God, thro' a sacrific'd, risen, ascended, interceding Saviour, who will give eternal life to all his followers? Will not the divine, exceeding great and precious promises, which they recommend to others as a never-failing source of comfort and joy, be the same to themselves?

* John iv. 34.

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AND while they consider, that the design of their employment is to do the greatest good, to advance the glory of their Creator, and the happiness of their fellow-creatures, what pleasure must they feel when they are thus employed? To be eminently useful is highly grateful and agreeable to a generous mind. The gospel-ministry is an office of kindness, and those who discharge it well will find satisfaction in instructing the ignorant, in comforting the feeble-minded, in supporting the weak, in speaking a word in season to the dejected and disconsolate, and doing their best to reclaim the loose and vicious, as well as confirm and establish the virtuous and good; especially when there are considerable appearances of the desirable effects of their endeavours. How great satisfaction to find *the good pleasure of the Lord prosper in their hands?* and to be able to say to their people, *Ye are the epistles of Christ ministred by us * : Ye are our work, and the seals of our ministry in the Lord. What is our hope, our joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus, at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy †. They rejoice greatly when they see them walking in the truth.*

* 2 Cor. iii. 3.

† 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

This bears them up under their discouragements; this lightens their burden: Nay, they can *take pleasure in infirmities, in distresses, in reproaches, and persecutions for the sake of Christ, and even glory in tribulation*, when they see the fruit of their labours, in the regular and exemplary deportment of those who are committed to their charge. This will put *life* into them, as it did into the first preachers of the Gospel: *We are comforted* (says the *Apostle* to the *Thessalonians*) *in all our afflictions and distresses by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord; for what thanks can we render again to God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.* When they see reason to hope that God is pleased to make use of their ministry in promoting the salvation of souls (and if they are faithful, they will not fail to have some evidence thereof) it can't but give them great satisfaction and pleasure; which will be increased by the believing, realizing views of that *joy unspeakable and glorious*, which they shall enter into when they *rest from their labours, and their works follow them*, and the good master, who employed them, will publickly own them and

* 1 Theff. iii. 7, 8, 9.

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applaud them as *his good and faithful servants*. How pleasing a thought must it be (and how can they neglect often to entertain it) that they and the people who by their ministry have been train'd up for heaven, shall all meet there at last, and join together throughout endless ages in celebrating the praises of divine grace, which crown'd their labours with so much success? Such exercises of faith and hope, which their proper employment leads them to, must be very delightful and entertaining-----Now if all these things be laid together, if it be consider'd, how honourable, how profitable, how pleasurable the work of the ministry is, will it not appear to be a good and desirable work?

LET me now make a few practical reflections on the whole. And

1. WE learn from what has been said concerning the work of the ministry, that those who faithfully discharge it lay a just claim to the affectionate regards of the people. Are they engaged in so honourable and useful a service? then 'tis unjust and ungrateful to slight and neglect them. Private Christians, if they behave well in their respective spheres of action, are entitled to our esteem and affection;

fection; nor can we observe persons conscientiously performing the duties of their several stations in life, and not value them, if we have any value for true goodness. Gospel-ministers then, who are in a good measure qualify'd for their office, and solicitous to answer the great ends of it, won't be despis'd, or unkindly treated by such as think the gospel a privilege, and are appriz'd of the worth of souls. Nor was that exhortation of the *Apostle* to the *Thessalonians* peculiar to them, but design'd to be of use to Christians, in succeeding ages of the church; 1 *Ep.* v. 12, 13. *We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them highly in love for their work sake.* The good work which ministers apply themselves to with a suitable concern, and their serious endeavours to spread practical religion, do most certainly demand your cordial respect, with all the proper expressions of it. And how fashionable soever it be to run down a Gospel-ministry, and pour contempt on those who are employ'd in it; 'tis very unreasonable: and while men affect to shew their wit, in ridiculing that which is evidently of such importance to the welfare of mankind, they

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discover their want of *wisdom*.---- You will not suppose that I am here justifying the exorbitant claims of ecclesiastical authority, nor pleading the cause of those who manage *as lords over God's heritage*, or of those who appear not to *desire the work* while they bear the *office and character* of ministers of Christ ; who manifest a far greater concern about securing and enlarging the secular emoluments of their function, than discharging the duties of it ; and who, while they neglect their proper work, engage in the *works of the flesh, and the devil* ; whose lives are repugnant to their doctrine, and who are a scandal and reproach to their character : For such as these I have nothing to say ; nor can they ever maintain the honour of their ministry, or reasonably challenge or expect the regards of the people. They may talk as much as they please of the sacredness of their office, and of the authority with which they are vested, demanding submission and veneration : such discourse will have no effect upon the *thinking part* of mankind, nor will it be possible for them to engage the respect of *such*, while they take methods to render themselves vile and contemptible ; nor will they be able to make amends for their want of *religion*, by
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their great zeal for those things which are *no part of it*. They may pretend, *they*, and none but *they*, are ministers by a *divine right*; while wise and pious observers will infer from their conduct, that they are *really no ministers at all*, nor have receiv'd any commission from Christ. So that the mere *name* and *character*, without a suitable management, gives no just title to a particular regard and esteem; but on the contrary produces the *greater dislike and aversion* in all those who have any concern for the honour of religion, or desire of its prevalence in the world; which nothing tends more to prevent, than the sloth, and negligence, and loose conversations of its ministers.

BUT those who consider the work and duty of their office, and are in a good degree careful to perform it, are, doubtless, to be valued and respected. Let *the elders that rule well* (says the Apostle) *be counted worthy of double honour; especially they who labour in the word and doctrine* *. Their labours and services justly demand thankful acknowledgments and returns from the people to whom they minister; who ought to endeavour to make them easy in all respects, to prize their labours, to be tender of their reputation, to

* 1 Tim. v. 17.

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put the most favourable construction on their words and actions, and to make them the common allowances due to the frailty of human nature; remembering that they are *men of like passions with others*: finally, to contribute according to their abilities, for their comfortable subsistence, considering their doing so, not as an act of *mere kindness*, but of *plain equity*, and the payment of a *just debt*; knowing our Lord hath ordained, that *they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel**; and being disposed to obey that command, *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things*†.

2. If the work of the ministry be so *good a work*, then let none think themselves, or their dearest relatives, *too good* for it, or imagine they can make choice of a better employment. 'Tis pity those who are not destitute of requisite qualifications for *this*, should turn their thoughts to *other professions*; for no other reason but because *this* has *more difficulties*, or *fewer temporal advantages* attending it. 'Tis pity too, that any should be so intent upon seeking *great things* in the world for those who are under their care, as

* 1 Cor. ix. 14.

† Gal. vi. 6.

to discountenance and check, instead of encouraging and cherishing any appearing inclinations to this good and desirable work. I have indeed sometimes wonder'd, that so many persons of consideration in the world, who are in the judgment of charity friends to religion, should be so backward to give their children, of a *promising genius*, a liberal education, with this view, that they should reckon the ministry too mean and low an employment for them; and chuse rather to place them in such a way of life, as will necessarily lay them open to great and dangerous temptations, and render it very difficult for them to preserve their innocence and keep a good conscience.

SOME, perhaps, may be here ready to urge, that an objection of this sort lies against the most publick celebrated places of education; that they have been represented as nurseries of debauchery, as well as learning, and that vices flourish there, as much as arts and sciences. I would fain hope there is not *so much ground* for this suggestion as a great many imagine. If there be *any*, 'tis, doubtless, a consideration that will have weight with all good people, who will be afraid to venture those, for whose welfare they have
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the tenderest concern, in *such places* (*whatever profession* they are designed for) where their minds and manners are likely to be corrupted. But, as I presume 'twill be allow'd there are *none such* amongst *us*; nor any employ'd as *tutors*, who are not solicitous to possess their *pupils* with a sense of virtue and religion, as well as acquaint them with the various parts of literature and useful knowledge; so this can be no good reason why *any of us* should resolve against dedicating our children to the service of the altar. We may bring them up for it without running such hazards as the objection supposes some others do; *without* remarkably exposing them to the influence of bad company, and bad examples; or laying them under the necessity of taking oaths, which it can't be expected they should keep, and subscribing articles of faith, which it can't be suppos'd they have examin'd, or at all consider'd; and *without* incurring the danger of their taking in early prejudices, and having their spirits imbitter'd against good people who happen to differ from them; the *danger* of imbibing principles of disloyalty and disaffection to the government, and of uncharitableness to their fellow-christians. And so the mention'd objection, as to *us*, can
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be of no force ; nor can the snares attending the education of our children for the ministry, be justly considered as a bar to it ; and why should we suffer any other regards to prevail and determine us against it ? Give me leave to ask, why should those callings be so much prefer'd that relate only to this mortal life, and terminate in the body ? Can you say, those are more honourably or beneficially employ'd, who devote themselves to such studies, labours and cares, as tend only to the accommodation and support of the outward man, than those whose business 'tis to dress and improve, to beautify and adorn the inward, and to form souls, under God, for an everlasting world of complete felicity and glory ? and what occupation (I beseech you) is exempt from difficulties, and from a variety of disagreeable incidents and occurrences ? Why may not your friends live as comfortably in this, as in any other employment ? Do you know *any* that's really better in it's nature and consequences ; that's more conducive to the true interest of those who are engag'd in it, as well as those to whom they minister ? If not, why should this be one of the last you would chuse for them ? Is such a temper and conduct suitable to that concern for the advancement of religion,

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religion, which you would be thought to be govern'd by, or your belief of those exalted degrees of happiness in the next world which faithful ministers are entitled to?—I wish this matter may be better consider'd by christians, who profess to *seek not their own things, but the things of Jesus Christ*, and to devote their *all* to his service: that no worldly considerations may be effectual to prevent the designing and training up those for so good a work, who appear to have hopeful capacities and dispositions, and who would probably be serviceable to his interest under the character of his ministers.

3. *and lastly*, LET us all be sensible how much it concerns us to further and promote, in our respective stations and capacities, the success of that good work wherein ministers are engag'd, and those valuable ends for which the office was instituted and design'd. We who have taken this office upon us, should be ever solicitous to behave answerably to the excellence and importance of our function and character; and to comport therewith by such a regular and exemplary conduct as tends effectually to recommend the religion we preach, and to diffuse the favour of it around us. Ours is a *good work*. As we should be thankful to him

him who hath called us to it, so we must take heed that *our good be not evil spoken of*, and that *the ministry be not blam'd on our account*. 'Tis an *honourable work*: Let us never stoop to any thing that's base and *dishonourable*; but *in all things approve ourselves the ministers of Christ, and be patterns of good works; examples to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*; demeaning ourselves so as to conciliate the love and respect of the wise and the good; being diligent in performing the useful work we have undertaken, that it may be pleasant to us, and attended with comfortable success. Let us remember that this *good work* deserves our best endeavours, demands the most intense study and application, the greatest life and seriousness, the most seraphick ardours of soul, and most vigorous exertion and imployment of our faculties: nor let us be *slothful* in it, but *with our spirit serve our God in the gospel of his son*. Let our zeal bear some proportion to the dignity of our trust; and be increas'd by the consideration of the shortness of our time, as well as the greatness of our work, and the uncertainty of our opportunities for the performance of it: ever keeping the great ends of our

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ministry

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ministry in view; and laying out our care, not upon those things which have no tendency to edification, but upon the essential and indisputable matters of our holy religion; carefully avoiding every thing which is likely to hinder the good effect of our labours.

LET us keep within our proper sphere, and not meddle with what does not belong to us; nor fancy our work in some instances to be more extensive than it is, while we contract it in others: Let us take heed that we don't exceed our commission, nor assume any powers which were never given us: Let us never affect to have dominion over the faith and consciences of others; but let it be our utmost ambition to be helpers and promoters of their holiness and joy. Let us give no just occasion for any to charge us with an invasion of our Lord's prerogative; but teach people to observe whatsoever he hath commanded, and nothing else, nor make any thing necessary to be believ'd or practis'd which he hath not declar'd to be so; being always disposed to give others the liberty *we* take, and to advise them to *search the Scriptures, and judge for themselves*. Nor let us ever, by our own practice, justify those who take ungenerous methods to weaken our
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hands, and hinder our successful progress in the *good work* to which we are called. Let us pity, and not imitate such as are employ'd in the *evil work* of defamation; and however others carry it towards us, let us be determined to behave as the servants and followers of a meek and lowly Jesus: Let us abhor the thoughts of advancing our selves by depressing our brethren, of raising our own reputation on the ruins of theirs; and let us ever (as * one finely expresses it) “scorn a
“glory which can’t shew itself but in an
“eclipse.”

NOR let us be discourag’d and dishearten’d by the difficulties that attend us in our work. ’Tis a *good work*, we serve a good master, we are engaged in a good cause, and we have a good hope, thro’ grace, that all will issue well at last. Let this be our support under any *bad treatment* we meet with in the discharge of it; and let us go on with the design of saving souls, animated and enlivened by such thoughts and views; earnestly imploring the concurrence of a power superior to our own; that being *strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, we may fulfil the ministry we

* Dr. Milner in his excellent charge at the ordination of Mr. Amory, &c. p. 69.

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have received of him, and not faint in our minds.

AND how much does it concern those who are under the care of gospel-ministers, to use their endeavours that the *good work* may be attended with answerable success, and heartily to fall in with the great design which *they* are pursuing? You have reason to be thankful (my friends) for so glorious and useful an institution, and to adore the goodness of God, who has made such wise provision for your spiritual and eternal welfare. Let it appear you are sensible of your obligations to him for this kind dispensation, by making a suitable improvement of it. Assist us, we beseech you, in supporting the credit of our ministry, and let your pious and holy lives be *our letters of commendation, to be read and seen of all men.* 'Twill be really no advantage to you that your ministers are employ'd in so *good a work*, but, on the contrary, an aggravation of your guilt and misery, if you don't sincerely aim at *getting good* by their ministrations. If you are backward to attend upon them, or do it with a heedless indifference, not *receiving the truth in the love of it*, nor endeavouring to impress the sense of the word you hear, on your hearts and consciences, that
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your temper and conversation may be regulated and govern'd by it : *If you have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it ** : If you can content yourselves with the use of the external means, and the performance of the instrumental duties of religion, without striving to reach the great ends and purposes of divine institutions, for which alone they are to be valu'd : If you think you act your part well enough while you keep your church, and are respectful to your ministers, tho' you can live in the sins they warn you against, and have no mind to practise those rules of piety and virtue which they recommend : If it be thus, how unprofitable to *you* must the work of the ministry be ? and how much unkindness to those who are engag'd in it, as well as to yourselves, will you thus discover ? Thus you'll grieve *them*, and ruin *yourselves* at the same time. Let me intreat you then, for their sakes and your own, to do your part towards promoting the success of their ministry ; own it, and honour it, and express your value for it, by complying with the intention of it ; by believing and obeying the Gospel which *they* preach, who as *workers together with God*, beseech you that ye receive not

* 2 Tim. iii. 5.

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the grace of God in vain *. Let that grace effectually teach you to deny ungodliness, and all worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world †. Nor let your ministers have cause to complain now, or be call'd to testify against you in the great day, that you would not hearken to their report, nor receive their message; that all they offer'd to your consideration, to ingage you in their master's interest, was lost upon you, and you would not come to him that you might have life. Oh let not this be the dreadful case of any of you! but be persuaded, in this day of your visitation, to know the things relating to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes. Fulfil ye the joy of your ministers in being thus minded: Lessen the difficulties, and increase the pleasure of their work, by acting agreeably to the good advices they give you; by your observable attachment to vital, uncorrupted, and catholick christianity; by the genuine expressions of love to the Lord Jesus, and all the saints, of whatever denomination or persuasion; by your readiness to do good to all as you have opportunity and capacity: particularly, to instruct, and counsel, and exhort those who are under your more

* 2 Cor. vi. 1. † Tit. ii. 11, 12.

immediate care and influence ; that they may be the more dispos'd to profit by ministerial instructions and exhortations. By these and other instances of a behaviour becoming the Gospel of Christ, be you perswaded to facilitate the work of his ministers, and strengthen their hands in it. Thus make it appear that the Gospel is come to you *not in the word only, but in power* ; and that those *who are over you in the Lord* have not made fruitless attempts to fix you in his service. You reckon it a privilege (and 'tis doubtless no inconsiderable one) to have the liberty of *chusing your own ministers* ; but let me beg you to consider that this will serve no good purpose at all, if you don't *chuse* to follow their directions, and *to adorn the doctrine* they deliver, by a suitable conduct. May this be your constant care.

MAY you, in particular, who statedly worship in this place, sincerely resolve to encourage the *worthy person* you have chosen to serve you in your highest concerns. May you encourage him in the work which he desires and devotes himself to, by the visible proofs of its success upon you, by your endeavours to *walk so as to please God*, and to *abound in all the fruits of righteousness and goodness*,

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goodness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. To this end, be frequent and fervent in your prayers for him, and for yourselves; remembering that all our sufficiency is of God, and that, whoever *plants or waters*, 'tis HE *that giveth the increase*. And let us all at this time join in our earnest addresses to heaven for a plentiful effusion of the Divine Spirit on minister and people; that *He may come to them in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, and They may receive him in the Lord with all gladness*; and there may be such an harmonious concurrence in carrying on the *good work*, that both *he that preacheth, and they that hear*, may at last rejoice together! Which God of his infinite mercy grant. *Amen.*





THE C H A R G E.



AS the truth of the *Christian Religion* appears in the superior excellence of its doctrines and precepts, and the excellence of these in their manifest tendency to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind; so the great usefulness of the *Christian Ministry* is alike obvious to all considering persons, from the original design of it, to instruct men in this excellent, this divine, religion, and to persuade them to live agreeably to it, in certain hope of the reward of eternal life through *Jesus Christ* our Lord: the serious thought of which must yield very great satisfaction to all sincere, intelligent, Christians. And I particularly mention it for *your* encouragement, *Sir*, who have been now separated to this sacred office, as well as *theirs* who have called you to labour among them in the word

and doctrine, and of any *others* that are present, and witnesses on this solemn occasion.

WHEN, with the dignity and importance of the pastoral care, there is a happy concurrence of the qualifications of the persons devoting themselves to it (which we have good reason to think is the case here) no prospect can be more agreeable, no juster ground of rejoicing, to the church of Christ.

IN the few things of which I would briefly put you in remembrance at this time, I shall take my rise from the *Apostle Paul's* exhortation to his son *Timothy*, 1 Ep. iv. 16. *Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

You see, Sir, here is the *end* supposed to be aimed at by a faithful Minister of the Gospel, viz. *his own salvation, and the salvation of those that hear him*; together with the *means* prescribed for the attainment of it; *taking heed to himself and to his doctrine*: in doing which, and so continuing, he hath the prospect of success to excite and inspirit him.

CAN there be a nobler *end*, and of nearer concernment to us all, than *that* here proposed? For by *salvation*, in the Gospel sense of the word, every one knows the highest happiness

happinefs to be understood of which man is capable; the utmost perfection of all his faculties, and affluence of the moft fatisfying delights, in the prefence and enjoyment of God to eternity: for he is both the *fole Author* and the *supreme Object* of this felicity, to whom, as the eternal fountain of all good, be glory for ever. 'Tis to the praife of the glory of his grace, that he hath made us accepted in the Beloved *. The glory of his attributes is the final refult of all his works, of *creation, providence, and redemption*; in which therefore we are to terminate our regard.

AND when we confider the neceffity of making each of thefe a part of our *chief end*, with the infeparable connection, and natural fubordination, there is betwixt them, it muft appear ftrange, that in a cafe fo plain, and where all fides appeal to *Reason* and *Scripture* as the common rule of decifion, there fhould be fuch a diverfity (I was going to have faid *contrariety*) in the fentiments of men about thefe things: or, if not in their *fentiments* *themselves*, yet in their manner of *explaining* them; one representing *Self-love*, another *Benevolence*, a third a *Zeal for the glory of God*, as in effect the *fole principle* which over-

* Eph. i. 6.

rules and swallows up the other two. Which, perhaps, may *in part* be owing to their not attending to the following plain distinction, *viz.* that, if we speak of their respective *dignity* and *importance*, it must be acknowledged, that the first in order is the *glory of God*, next to that the *general good*, and in the third and last place *private felicity*. But if we consider the *natural progress of the mind in its operations*, we begin with seeking our own happiness, then, together with our *ideas*, enlarge our *desires* too, to the happiness of others; and from thence rise to the glory of God, as the farthest limit of our view: while, from an inward conviction of the necessary relation between them, and the mutual happy influence they have upon one another, we jointly pursue all three. Nor is there any need of our being solicitous about the respective degree of strength with which they act upon us; this being an enquiry more curious than useful, and, generally speaking, not so very easy to be resolved. 'Tis enough, that each of them powerfully determines us, and in perfect concert with the other two.

Thou shalt save thyself. This is one part of the motive made use of by the *Apostle* in order to engage *Timothy* to the vigorous discharge of his duty; not barely signifying
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what would be the *effect* of his taking the course here directed to (of which afterwards) but what he might and ought to *propose to himself*, and what the *Apostle* takes it for granted he did propose, for his encouragement in well-doing.

Self-love is an original affection of our nature; and the proper object of *self-love* is *self-interest*, or happiness, *truly so called*. Nor does religion aim to extinguish this natural principle in us, or oblige us to endeavour it; but only teach us how to make a right use of it, by the knowledge it gives us of our chief good, and final felicity.

REGARD that as your highest interest, which is really such; aspire to the happiness set before you in the Gospel; and then, that you are *self-interested*, in this sense of the word, will be not your crime, but your virtue, a commendation, not a reproach; not in the least interfering with the desire of pleasing and glorifying God, and contributing to the happiness of your fellow-creatures, but adding fresh life and strength to it. Unless you are concerned for your own *real* happiness, you will never be so for *that* of others; nor for the honour of the Supreme Being, of whom you can have no very exalted apprehensions, while you represent him not to yourself as
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the original fountain of perfection and happiness to his intelligent creatures. Nothing will awaken the mind of man, naturally indolent and sluggish, like the prospect of an eternal heaven, the abode of holy and happy spirits, of sacred joys, and everlasting rest; the *hope* of arriving at these blessed mansions, on the *one hand*, and the *fear* of coming short of them, *on the other*. Knowing the *mercies* and the *terrors* of the *Lord*, you will be the more earnest to persuade men to *flee from the wrath to come*, and to *lay hold on eternal life*.

BEGIN therefore with the care of your own soul. Consider well its nature and dignity, forget not its danger; labour after the assurance of your own interest in the favour of God, and title to the promised reward; and the peace and satisfaction hence resulting will infuse a strange vigour into your faculties, quicken your zeal and alacrity in the service of your heavenly master, and render every part of your work much more easy and delightful.

NOR is there any fear of your over-doing it; or occasion for your distinguishing so nicely, as some have done, betwixt being influenced by the consideration of your own happiness, *as your own*, and *as a part* of the happiness of the *whole*, or a *means* of advancing

ing the *glory of God*; the latter of which they contend for, without allowing of the former. This is refining upon things till the very substance of them is quite gone, and can answer no end, that I see, but making some persons *conceited*, with an imagination of their having soared so much above the common pitch, and others *sad*, that ought not to be made so. When we are enjoined to love our neighbour *as* * ourselves (not *more than* ourselves) and have the example of *Moses*, and of a much greater than *Moses*, our *blessed Lord*, recorded for our imitation, one of whom chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, because he had *respect to the recompence of reward* †, the other for *the joy set before him*, willingly endured the *cross*, *despising the shame* ‡; in these, and so in other places, we have our duty simply proposed to us, without the least hint of any danger we are in of loving ourselves too well, and setting too high a value upon our own happiness, so as to pass over the love of *God*, and our *neighbour*.

You need not be told, that as a *Christian*, and much more as a *Christian Minister*, you should extend your good wishes and endeavours yet farther, and seek to *save others* as

* Mat. xxii. 39.

† Heb. xi. 26.

‡ Heb. xii. 2.
well

well as *yourself*. Thou shalt save *thyself*, and *them that hear thee*. Provided you are really solicitous about your own salvation, any such admonition as this will be little wanted. You will not, you *cannot*, in that case, have respect to your *own things* only, but will also *mind the things of others*; the very nature of these spiritual and eternal things being such, that the greater the number of the communicants is, the greater in some sense is the share of every one, at least as to the satisfaction he hath in them. And, there being one heart and one soul, no one faith, that ought of the things he possesses is his own, but the joy of one is the joy of all. Which, by the way, is a thought that does not much favour the *narrow scheme*, which contracts the bounds of the divine mercy, and supposes the grace to be the greater for the fewness of those to whom it is shewn: as if the happiness of *heaven* was not a *social thing*; and the command to rejoice with them that rejoice*, did not imply that our joy, and consequently our obligation to the great author of it, is not the less, but the greater for the extensiveness of the divine bounty and goodness. I cannot forbear thinking, that had men a greater largeness of *heart*,

* Rom. xii. 15.

their *notions* of the love of God would ordinarily be larger too; the defect never lying on God's part.

LET me add, while you are earnestly contending to *save yourself*, and *them that bear you*, and to do all the good you can to all, what you feel in your own breast will be a sufficient conviction of the falsity of their notion, who assert all *benevolence* to be nothing else but *self-love* in disguise, differing from what is commonly so called, only in this, that in one case self-love goes more *directly* to its end, in the other more *round about*, by the way of common good, which it considers and values merely as a means of private happiness. Only observe the workings of your own mind, and you will find this to be a gross misrepresentation of human nature, and exceeding unjust; for tho' self-love be in *nature* prior to every other affection, and a man supposed not to love himself, could not love any person or thing besides; because having no happiness of his own, he could have no notion what the happiness of another meant, nor indeed any such principle as love and desire in his nature; yet the idea of benevolence, or the good-will we bear to others, is plainly distinct from *that* of self-love, and may be

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proved to be so by the pleasure immediately arising from the happiness of our fellow-creatures, especially when in a great degree owing to us; for which pleasure there would be no room, supposing every man were conscious to himself, that the happiness or misery of all other persons were alike indifferent to him, any farther than his own happened to be connected with theirs; like those who, being embarked in the same vessel, and joint sharers in the profits of the voyage, should heartily wish the preservation of the ship, and help towards it; but each with a view only to himself, otherwise not in the least concerned whether it arrived safe to the intended haven, or sunk to the bottom of the ocean.

Social affections are a credit to human nature. There is a pleasure in the exercise of them, where only some *inferior good* is to be procured; but the divinest satisfaction is when we befriend others in respect of their *bighest, their eternal, interests*. The *salvation of souls* is a glorious end indeed, the vast importance of the ministerial office is never more conspicuous than in this way of considering it; as, in this view of it, every one who engages in it with right aims, and hath generous affections beating in his breast, must be *disposed,*

posed, as well as reckon himself *obliged*, to do his utmost to prevent the misery and ruin of his fellow-christians; those especially of whom he hath a more particular charge, and to direct, and quicken, and assist them in their pursuit after everlasting happiness. If the gain of the whole world cannot countervail the loss of a single soul, what more worthy the ambition of a truly great mind, than not to save one soul only (though that would richly reward the pains taken to this end) but many souls from death, and to conduct them in the paths of righteousness and immortality. Think of this, and you will hardly need any other motive to the faithful discharge of your duty.-----And yet I cannot forbear mentioning this farther consideration, that in labouring for the salvation of immortal souls, you will have the noblest of all examples, *that* of the *Son of God*, the great friend and lover of souls, to animate you, who for the redemption of the world, lapsed into a state of extreme ignorance and corruption, and to recover that immortality which was lost by the sin of man, became incarnate and died. This was the travail of his soul, to ransom the souls of men; the effect of which when he sees he is satisfied *,

* Isaiah liii. 10, 11.

finding the pleasure of the Lord to prosper in his hand, and blessed with a numerous seed of righteous persons like himself, prepared to enjoy those glorious rewards which he procures for, and will finally bestow upon them.-----Though this single instance of love to the souls of men exceeds all others taken together, and should, and *will*, have more weight with every one truly devoted to the service of his great Lord; yet it may not be amiss, nay it may be of great use, to recollect any other examples of this kind in a lower sphere; especially *that* of the *Apostle Paul*, who writing to the *Philippians* *, appeals to God as his record, how earnestly he longed after them all in the bowels of Christ; tells the *Corinthians* †, that they were in his heart to die and to live with them; and the *Thessalonians* ‡, that he reckoned himself to live when they stood fast in the Lord; whose heart's desire and prayer to God for *Israel* was, that they might be saved, ready, were it proper, to wish himself accursed § from Christ (cut off from all the privileges of external communion with his church) for their sakes, and by a violent death to be offered up to God on the sacrifice and service

* Phil. i. 8. † 2 Cor. vii. 3. ‡ 1 Theff. iii. 8.
§ Rom. ix. 3. x. 1.

of their faith whom he had converted to the profession of the Gospel *.

IN a word then, the *end* I suppose you to have in view, *viz.* everlasting happiness or salvation, both your own and that of others, with the glory of God as the Supreme Author, Conductor, and Finisher of this vast design, must, duly considered, prove a mighty incentive to diligence and resolution in the use of all those *means* by which it is accomplished.

AND what the *principal* of these *means* are in respect of the part which the ministers of the Gospel have in the conversion and salvation of souls, the *Apostle* hath informed us in these words, *Take heed unto thy self, and to thy doctrine.* For once, suppose this exhortation directed to you; as in effect it is in the person of *Timothy*, and to all others who have taken the pastoral charge upon them.

Take heed unto yourself. In general, that your character, as a sincerely good man, a disciple of Christ indeed, be unexceptionable; and, more *particularly*, that you do not come behind in certain virtues which are likely to have a peculiarly good influence in this matter.

* Phil. ii. 17.

IN *general*, you are to take heed that your character, as a person of true christian integrity, be unblemished. Every minister of the Gospel ought to be a good man; this qualification is indispensable. It was formerly, by the *Heathens* themselves, thought a necessary qualification for their accomplished orator, that he should be so: much more then must this be necessary for the *Christian orator*, whose sole business almost lies in persuading men to be *good*, that they may be *happy*. I must be sure not to want that myself, of the absolute necessity of which I am continually endeavouring to convince others; and, while I warn them against being deceived with a wrong notion of genuine vital religion, or of their own state and condition, not to be mistaken myself in these things, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

NAY simply to be good should not content you, but you should endeavour to *excel*; to have the evidence of your sincerity as bright and strong, and the objections against it as few as may be. This is the more needful, not only that you may be an example to the flock, which every minister ought to be, and teach men their duty with
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the greater force and authority, but to put to silence the *enemies* of religion, shall I say, only, or likewise add some of the *friends* of it too. I fear this latter is too often the case, in the present divided state of the Christian church; that which would otherwise be a sufficient proof of a man's goodness in the judgment of common charity, not passing for such among those who do not so well like him on some other accounts. To bear down such prejudices, a person must not have many failings and blemishes; little less than demonstration being admitted, sometimes, by good men one of another, when they do not serve in the same party. Why; since they are thus unreasonable, demonstration let them have, as far as you are capable of giving it, that what they will not grant out of *charity* and *equity*, they may be obliged to do from the irresistible force of *conviction*.

THERE are *certain virtues* which you should more *particularly* cultivate, as they are likely to have a peculiarly good influence in this matter. Such, among others, are Humility and Meekness, Temperance, Sincerity, a Contempt of every thing mean and sordid, a Peaceable Temper, Charity, Courage in a good cause, and, to add no more, Prudence.

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THE more *humble* and *meek* you are, so as to keep your self-esteem, and your anger, within due bounds, the more you will resemble your great Lord and Master, in whom these amiable qualities were so distinguishing, that he invites his followers to learn them from his example *. Maintain a wise sobriety of mind, and shew it in your outward behaviour, neither assuming honours and pre-eminences which do not belong to you, nor unseasonably and importunately challenging those that do; but rather leaving others to find out, and freely acknowledge what is valuable in you, than pointing it out to them, and thereby making them think you are too sensible of it yourself.

THUS you will enjoy a rest and tranquillity of soul, which you must not otherwise hope for, and rise higher in favour both with God and man, according to our Saviour's observation, that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted †. Despise none, and you will not be despised by any: Command your own passions, and you will have the greater ascendant over the passions of other men.

A well-regulated *temperance*, in respect of the pleasures of sense, alike remote from a

* Mat. xi. 29.

† Luke xiv. 11.

superstitious austerity on the one hand, and whatever borders on too great delicacy or indulgence on the other, will be of use to preserve your faculties in their clearness and vigour, to guard the freedom of your mind, to convince the world that the pleasures of knowledge, of virtue, and devotion, are the proper happiness of the man, and so esteemed by you, and to give you the higher relish of these purer and more sublime delights.

By *simplicity* and *godly sincerity*, a frank open behaviour, void of all guile and artifice, you will at once gain the *esteem* and *love* of those you converse with, and be let into their very souls, when they can see into yours; having no reason to suspect you of any design upon them, but what you avow, they will give the greater heed to all you say, as sincerely intended for their good.

ESPECIALLY, as this sincerity is usually, if not always, joined with an *elevation* and *greatness of soul*, that makes a man scorn every thing mean and sordid. One of this character never loves money so well as for the sake of it to act a niggardly, unfriendly, dishonourable, not to say an unjust part; and, if he take the oversight of the flock of God, does it not for *silly* lucre, but of a

ready mind. He values riches only for their *use*, not for *themselves*, and believes, that as God knows what portion of these things is safest and best for him upon the whole, so he will give it him; considering which, he can be contented without them, and, as the consequence of that, will descend to no base arts to get them, and of what he hath (if he hath more than necessities) will rather be over liberal than too sparing. Nothing makes a man look so truly great in the eyes of the world as this noble disposition, while covetousness sinks the character of any man, and most of all of a minister.

Love, follow, and make *Peace*. 'Tis the happiest *temper*, the most divine *employment*. Besides the reward immediately attending a state of tranquillity, you will have an opportunity of doing more good, the fruit of righteousness being, in this sense, sown in peace, in a calm halcyon season, by them that make peace. There are few things, *truth* and *honesty* excepted, which a man should not be willing to sacrifice for peace-sake. And blessed are all they who are so disposed, for they shall be called the children of God*.

* Mat. v. 9.

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LET your *charity* never fail. Let not a diversity of sentiments (but, because this alone is a small thing, I therefore add) or unfair insinuations and reflections, manifest misrepresentations, or even despicable and injurious usage, be able to cool, much less to extinguish, this sacred fire in your breast. *Do good to all; think well of as many, and as long as you can; and speak evil of none.* Whatever success a blind intemperate zeal may have for a time, charity must get the victory in the end.

NOR will your pursuing peace and charity, at all interfere with *boldness* and *courage*, and an *inflexible constancy*, in a good cause. While you allow others a sort of latitude in thinking and acting, according to the different light and manner in which the same things may appear to the minds of sincere Christians themselves, you are not to vary a hair's breadth in your own profession and practice from what you apprehend to be right and true. Be zealous, resolved, and steadfast, though always with a spirit of meekness, and a mind open to conviction, from *whomsoever* or from *whencesoever* it comes. Thus you will best answer the common objection against the advocates for peace, and liberty, and cha-

rity, that 'tis not a zeal for these things, but an indifference to the principles of religion, that is the true spring and reason of their conduct.

Finally, By no means think prudence, as long as it is truly such, and does not degenerate into *craft*, a thing to be ashamed of; but get as much of it as you can, and make as much use of it (always coupling it with sincerity) since all you can get will be sure little enough as times and men now are. I will not say, *that* part of our Saviour's advice to his *Apostles*, *be wise as serpents**, is *as much* in season *now* as it was at the time of its being *first* given; but this I will venture to say, that the present is a season in which it can very ill be spared. A man hath occasion for a great deal of prudence, that his very *good* be not *evil* spoken of. So many notions, tempers, passions, interests, prejudices, as a minister hath to deal with; so many proud, busy, officious, ill-designing men as there are, on the one hand, and so many weak, how well-meaning soever, on the other; in order to keep clear of all offence, he must steer with uncommon caution, and, if possible, make himself a thorough

Mat. x. 16.

master

master of the art of prudence ; the *art*, I say, which hath no other bounds but those which the *virtue* of prudence prescribes to it. I pray God to quicken you in the pursuit, and assist you in the attainment of *this*, and every other *good gift* ; as you have no reason to doubt he will, on condition that, humbly sensible of your dependance upon him, you entreat the illumination and aids of his Spirit, and do not receive them in vain.

THE other head of advice is, *Take heed to your doctrine* : that you teach truth, and nothing but truth, if you can help it, at least nothing apparently inconsistent with the fundamental principles of religion, natural, or revealed ; and when I say *apparently*, I mean to every *honest mind*, of *tolerable capacity*, and not *clouded with prejudice* ; which too often happens.

BUT *what is truth?* and *where* shall we find it? As our Saviour foretold, the time would come when they should say, *Lo here is Christ, or lo he is there* ; so fares it with *truth*, amidst the several contending parties in the Christian world, each pretending to have the sole possession of the true doctrine of Christ, and the sole right of dispensing it. If you would know the truth, come to us. But I shall venture to say in this, as our *bles-*
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sed Lord did in the other case, *believe it not, go not after them*; which I intend of following them with an implicit faith, and imitating their party-spirit; not against hearing what they have to say for themselves. To seek after truth in this way, laying aside the *Scriptures*, or understanding them by the *comments* of the several parties, would be a desperate undertaking. Nay, I do not see how a man could come to any determination at all, unless he was able to reconcile contradictions, or resolved right or wrong to stick to the side he was bred up in, or which some secular view led him to espouse. Truth is best fought, and easiest found in the *Scriptures themselves*; here therefore you should seek for it, yet so as not to neglect any assistance that offers towards your advancement in this sort of knowledge, which is the method you take in the other parts of learning; still reserving a right of judging for yourself upon the whole. Give your attendance to reading, meditate on these things, give your self in a manner wholly to them; and, as the reward of your thus diligently searching the *Scriptures* with a pure, an upright, and a humble mind, you may reasonably expect to succeed better, and to have greater degrees
of

of the divine acceptance and illumination, than in any other method. Honest men that think for themselves, will value you the more for doing what they themselves have done, though the consequence should be your differing from them in some opinions; and as for the censures of others, who want honesty, or whose notions are not properly their own, but their party's from whom they have taken them, they are not worth regarding.

BESIDES more *direct evidence*, truth hath very often the advantage of some *marks* by which 'tis characteris'd and distinguish'd from falshood. *Errors* are apt to clash, and contradict one another; but there's a constant harmony in *truth*; and therefore the more connected the several parts of your scheme are, and the more support they lend one to the other, and derive from those general principles which are common to every system, so much the better. Where there is a manifest inconsistency between the principles of religion universally acknowledged amongst Christians, and some other notions which men endeavour to fasten on to them, so that they cohere no better than the iron and clay in the feet of *Nebuchadnezzar's* visionary image, or rather destroy one another, like
fire

fire and water (and it were easy to name some doctrines in which this happens *) you may be sure of the falsity of all such notions; notwithstanding the unnatural alliance in vain

* That God is a Being of the most perfect rectitude of nature, *infinitely holy, one that loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity*, is a principle acknowledg'd by all Christians; and yet even among Christians there are those who hold every man's character and actions, good or bad, to be originally owing to the *absolute decree* of God; so that whatever *causes* the evil action *immediately* flows from, the *will of God* is the *first* and *supreme* cause, in obedience to which all other causes necessarily produce the effects they do, and cannot possibly produce any other: the consistency of which two, *viz.* God's *hatred of sin*, with his *decreeing or willing* its existence, they that *can* shew, are humbly desir'd to do it. — The same persons profess to believe, agreeably to the general sense of mankind, and the constant language of *scripture*, that God is *just*, and *good*, and *gracious*, in the highest degree of perfection; notwithstanding which, they suppose the *first man's* disobedience to affect his posterity in such a manner, by *imputation* or *propagation*, that they are *all* *deserving* of eternal misery, and *much* the *great part* of them *actually* suffer it, as the unavoidable consequence of an action which they could not help: Is there no contradiction, I do not say to *infinite goodness*, or to *any goodness*, but to *justice*, in this proceeding? Surely, he must wink hard that does not see it. — It is a dictate of universal reason, that *God is true*, and not denied by those very men, who, at the same time give such a sense to the most solemn, the most express, the most numerous, and most unlimited exhortations, declarations, invitations, entreaties and promises of the word of God, as makes them signify nothing at all, or, what is worse than nothing to the major part of the christian world, serving only to delude them with false hopes now, and to aggravate their condemnation at last. *THOU* Either this is representing God as acting inconsistently with sincerity and veracity; or sincerity and dissimulation, veracity and unfaithfulness are the same things. — While, *in words*, all men own the truth of this proposition, that *God is no respecter of persons*; ratified by the consenting voice of *reason* and *revelation*,

vain attempted between them and the most sacred truths.

ANOTHER mark of *truth* in religion is, the good influence it hath upon *holiness*, or a right temper of mind, and all the duties and virtues of a christian life. *Practical* truth grows out of *speculative*; at least, can no more be hurt by it, than one speculative truth can be contrary to, and disproved by another. This is that *sound doctrine* of which the *Apostle Paul* so often speaks in his *epistles* to *Timothy* and *Titus*; as any one may soon convince himself that will but consult the places, particularly, *1 Tim. i. 10. Tit. ii. 1*, and following verses. What promotes the morals of the Gospel, and, among these, *relative virtues*, tending to shew the necessity, the advantages, and the loveliness of them, is sound doctrine; whatever, in its *natural*

tion, how many *really*, or *in effect*, deny it, by teaching that, in the distribution of final recompences, the foundation of God's different proceeding with the children of men, is not their having acted or not acted according to their different abilities, and improv'd or not improv'd the talents committed to them; but their being of a certain number arbitrarily ordained to eternal life, or the contrary? Upon the whole, the peculiar principles of this odd scheme of doctrine are evidently repugnant to the first principles of natural and revealed religion professedly embrac'd by all Christians, and therefore must needs be false; and those places of scripture that seem to favour them ought to be taken in another and milder sense, of which they are easily capable, and which indeed they require, according to all the rules of just and fair construction.

consequence, vacates the obligations to a holy life, and discourages the practice of virtue in the whole, or in any particular branches of it, is contrary to sound doctrine, and can never make a part of the Christian revelation, which is a doctrine according to godliness *.

AMONG

+ * The scheme mention'd in the marginal note just before will, upon trial, be found to stand this test (*viz.* of the natural tendency of doctrines to promote or hinder a good life) no better than it did the former. Whatever principles destroy the very *notion* of moral good and evil, *i. e.* of virtue and vice, holiness and sin, and all *distinction* between them, have a plain tendency to banish virtue or holiness *itself* from the earth; for, once a man believes that all actions are alike indifferent, as to any moral good or evil that is in them, any praise or blame they deserve, there can be no room for *conscience*, which always supposes an intrinsic immutable difference in actions, and applauds or reproaches men according as they observe or neglect this difference in the conduct of their lives. But are the principles before-mentioned thus subversive of the moral differences of actions? Most certainly. Were there any thing morally and unchangeably good, it must be a rule of action to God himself; whereas, according to the notion advanced by some men of the *divine Sovereignty*, the supreme Being conducts all his proceedings by mere arbitrary will and pleasure. Again, if all things (*actions* as well as *events*) are in pursuance of absolute decrees, 'tis certain that men are not *free agents*; and if men are not *free*, so as to have a *power* to do good or evil, they cannot be *obliged* to do the one, and to forbear the other; nor can any thing they do be properly good or evil, in a *moral sense*, being the pure effect of necessity.—The same principles enervate all the *motives to holiness* from the *perfections* of God, his *goodness* manifested in *creation*, and in the course of his *providence*, his *unspeakable love* in giving his *only-begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, the *death of Christ*, and his *love in dying* for us; in a word, from the *promises* and *threatnings* of the Gospel. God, as represented by some, would not be a proper object of our imitation, having no *moral perfections* for us to imitate; or, which is much the same, we having no
ideas

AMONG other fruits of sound doctrine, there is one that deserves to be more particularly taken notice of, and that is *Love*, the noblest passion of the human soul, and highest perfection both of morality and religion. Nothing can inspire a *rational love of the Deity*, but *truth*, because nothing else can represent him as truly amiable. Just notions of God do this; while others, instead of cherishing that love of God which casteth out fear, and fills the reasonable mind with the most transporting pleasure in the contempla-

ideas of these perfections of holiness, justice, goodness and truth, *as in God*, and no other way to guess at them but by the *effects*, which, if such as described by these men, would make it the most unsafe and deceitful rule in the world, to act in imitation of the Deity. The goodness of creation and providence would quite vanish, as to the *non-elect*, when set over against the miseries of an everlasting state, to which it was designed to be introductory, and does inevitably lead them: no *benefit* being intended to the *non-elect* by the *mediation of Christ*, they could be under no *obligation* for it. And as to the *promises* and *threatnings* of the Gospel, the *non-elect* having no concern with the former, nor the *elect* with the latter, one of them would be without *hope*, the other without *fear*; one of them *desperate*, the other *secure*; according to mens believing themselves to be in one or the other class. And should it be suggested, that the decree is unknown to them; the answer is easy, that they know thus much, that whatever it be, it will certainly take place in its proper time, any thing they do, or can do, notwithstanding. The consequence of all which is, that the restraints from evil, and all motives to that which is good, being removed, men, following these principles, would give a loose to their passions, and be much worse than they now are. Whereas, did they act up to the contrary doctrines, man would bear a very great resemblance to God, and earth to heaven.

tion of his perfections and works, are, in their own nature, good for nothing else but to beget superstition in some, pride and uncharitableness in others, a secret disgust or endless doubts and perplexities in others, according to the different tempers of mens minds.---And there's the same difference in respect of *mutual benevolence*, or love to our fellow-creatures, on which some principles have the most friendly, others the most malignant aspect; some soften and enlarge the heart, others harden and contract it; some produce a strong and universal *attraction* among souls, others change the attractive into a *repelling* quality: The former notions are certainly true, the latter as undoubtedly false*.

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* Such are the notions which have been tried by the two former marks; they are inconsistent with the most evident dictates of reason, and destructive of sound morals. I now add, fatal above all, to *love*. Is the belief of God's having appointed one man to salvation, another to damnation, without any reason for it in the persons themselves, only because he will do it, a proper foundation to be laid for *the love of God*, whether we take that word as signifying a delightful veneration of God's perfections, or grateful sense of his goodness to us? No, certainly; not even on supposition I am fully persuaded of my being in the number of the chosen few. Since, if I rightly consider it, I can never approve a conduct in the greatest of beings, and in the highest instances, the lowest degrees of which I should abhor and condemn in any other. The greater the being, and the more extensive and terrible the desolation made by his arbitrary decrees, the more displeasing, instead of lovely and venerable, must his character appear. And as to his benefits,

THE *next care* to that of teaching the truth, and nothing else, ought to be, to insist most frequently and most earnestly on those truths that are most *necessary*, most *useful*, most *seasonable*. *Necessary* as essential, or at least very important points of the Christian Revelation, without which the general doctrine of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the wisdom of God in the Gospel-constitution, cannot so well be apprehended. *Useful*, for enlightning the mind, informing the conscience, purifying the heart,

benefits, how great soever, being conferr'd, not from any delight he takes in my happiness, but with the very same design as he makes others miserable, that is, purely to shew his irresistible power, they cannot inspire love : Much less shall I be disposed to love God, if under an uncertainty of my election ; and least of all can I be obliged to love God, or capable of doing it, if I think myself reprobated by him. By the way, this shews the difficulty, if not impossibility of proving our election upon rational grounds, according to these principles. I have no good reason to conclude myself elected of God, unless I love him, and I cannot love him except I first believe myself elected, *i. e.* according to this scheme, not to be arbitrarily rejected by him. — As for the love of our neighbour, what support can that receive from these ill-natur'd principles ? Will not those whose *inclinations* agree too well with their principles, think themselves justified to hate whom they believe God to hate, and be apt to make a sort of merit of conforming their wills and their conduct to his ? — On the contrary, when we believe the mercies of God to be over all his works, and his intention to save all who by their obstinate continuance in sin, do not exclude themselves from the common salvation ; the thoughts of such a glorious design naturally dilate the heart in love to God and man, and place all men in the most amiable point of view, as good, or capable of being so, and our companions in bliss for ever.

regu-

regulating the passions, and directing the course of the life : and *seasonable*, by being adapted to the necessities, the characters, and the circumstances of hearers.

AND that the truth may lose nothing by the *manner* of communicating it, you must be sensible that way ought to be chosen in which it is conveyed with the greatest *clearness* to the *conceptions* of men, the most convincing *evidence* to their *judgments*, and the most forcible and winning *address* to their *affections* ; to the intent they may at once discern the truth, receive it in the love thereof, and be engag'd to resolve and act agreeably to it. When your own thoughts of things are just and distinct, and your words and expressions, which are the dress of the thoughts, like a transparent veil, do not hide your meaning, but let it be plainly seen thro', when you neither treat your subjects in such a cold dry argumentative way as if you were talking of things of no importance to your self or hearers, and the truth had no charms but for the understanding ; nor yet raise the affections without laying an answerable foundation in the judgment to support them, but endeavour to have a proper mixture of strength and sweetness of light and warmth
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in your discourses; 'tis then you are likely to do most service to truth, and to the souls of men. Reason and argument there must be, or we do not deal with mankind as reasonable beings: But reason itself dictates that there ought to be something besides; because *human nature* is not made up entirely of *reason*, but of *reason* and *affection*.

SOME other things might be nam'd, to which you should, and I hope will take heed; such as performing all the parts of publick worship in a decent and edifying manner, agreeable to the *Scripture rule*, and to the nature of *Gospel institutions*: privately conversing with, advising, admonishing, and comforting your flock, as there is occasion; constantly in your secret devotions, and making them subservient and preparatory to your publick work. But I shall content myself to have just mention'd these things, not only because the *Apostle* saith nothing of them in this place, but also and chiefly because of their visible dependance upon what hath been before said; it being impossible that a pious minister, who hath a due concern for his own and the salvation of his hearers, and labours to conform his faith as well as his life to the *Holy Scriptures*, should be careless and indifferent about

bout his publick ministrations, or any thing else that may forward or prejudice his principal design.

I HAVE very little time left to consider the success promised to the steady observation of the method here laid down; take heed to thy self, and to thy doctrine, continue in them, for *in so doing thou shalt both save thy self, and them that hear thee.* The saving your self and others, is supposed to be the *great end* you have in view (as was said before) and it seems in this way, you have the greatest probability of attaining what you aim at: for tho' men of very indifferent lives may sometimes be instrumental in saving others by the goodness of their doctrine, and some who hold pernicious doctrines may do much by the goodness of their lives, and the influence of those truths which are mingled with their errors*; yet it may justly be expected, that the greatest

* It was promis'd by our Saviour to his first disciples, that if *they drank any deadly thing it should not hurt them.* We may say something like this of the pernicious doctrines embrac'd by some good men. They embrace them, and yet are not hurt by them; nay, and notwithstanding them, are, it may be useful to others, among whom they at once propagate their *virtues* and their *mistakes.* But then, as in the former case, what the disciples drank was nevertheless *deadly* in its own nature, because the operation of it was prevented by *miracle*; so here, mens escaping an hurt themselves, and being the instruments of good to others, is no argument of the *innocence,*

greatest execution will be done, where both these, a good conversation and good doctrine, are found united. Not that the effect, after all, will follow, as to the salvation of others, without their concurrence, in which they are free; but because, having taken the course now mentioned, you have discharg'd your duty, which is all that you are answerable for, so as to have rejoicing in yourself, and a humble assurance that your reward is with God, and have us'd the most probable means of bringing your hearers to concur with you; since *truth* and *goodness* are the best engines we can imploy in laying seige to the hearts of men: Nor as if, where the effect does follow, we were to ascribe the glory of it to *men*, but to *God*, by whose *word* and *spirit* it is brought about. The necessity of the divine assistance, or co-operation, is one of those things which they that take heed to their doctrine will not fail to teach and inculcate; but then as this assistance is *necessary*, so it

nocence, much less the *usefulness* of their notions. They may be exceeding pernicious in themselves for all that; only, an honest heart, and the virtue of some excellent truths, like a vigorous antidote, happily counter-act them. A noble medicine may cure, notwithstanding some improper ingredients mix'd up with it; yet still we should be very much mistaken to attribute the good effect of the medicine to these ingredients, which, at best, help nothing towards it, perhaps, very much diminish it.

may be *depended on* by all those, whether ministers or private Christians, who sincerely pray for it, and faithfully improve it, tho' they are not without their imperfections.

UPON the whole ; what an excellent work is it you are engag'd in ! and what a glorious prospect lies before you ! enough to put life and spirit into your endeavours, and to render *labour* itself a *pleasure*. That God may guide, assist, comfort, and prosper you in the future course of your ministry, is my heart's desire and prayer to God for you ; to which, I doubt not, all this numerous assembly of Christians will say, *Amen*.

F I N I S.

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